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a message from *the Iyarina Center for Learning in the Ecuadorian Amazon.*

In the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon, we find ourselves immersed in a world of ancient whispers, where every rustle and call is a communication from the land. “Kawsak sachaman” – “the forest is alive” – echoes in our elders’ wisdom, encapsulating the profound connection we share with the living, breathing entity that is the Amazon.

Located on the South bank of the Rio Napo, Iyarina Center for Learning serves as a hub of cultural exchange and solution building, bringing Indigenous leaders, knowledge carriers, students, artists, organizers, activists, professors, and researchers together. With extensions reaching into the Waorani territory on the Río Nushino and the Río Curaray, Iyarina also serves as bridge to more remote communities. For us, Iyarina is more than a physical location; it’s an interconnected web that binds us to the land and its inhabitants.

Community isn’t just about people; it’s about the land that has shaped us. It’s a commitment to respect rather than save it, an acknowledgment of our shared experiences, to know the significance of a cicada’s song and the arrival of swallow-tailed birds signaling imminent rain. It’s creating spaces for collaboration and living in resistance, all while honoring our ancestors and the generations yet to come.

In the Kichwa language, there’s no single word for “nature.” We understand that we are not separate from the natural world; we are an integral part of it. Bitter plant rituals, manduru paint, and cathartic songs are not just traditions; they are our way of life, living in reciprocity with the vibrant land we call home. As our elders pass and the forests face threats, our way of life is threatened. Yet, our message remains: land is not a commodity but a living entity, land is alive just as we are alive. We believe that sooner or later, this understanding will resonate universally, fostering a deeper connection with the world around us.

Our journey is one of resilience, a celebration of our culture, and a plea for a harmonious coexistence with the natural world. Through our words and rituals, we invite others to pause, listen, and appreciate the living symphony of the Amazon Rainforest – a place where the forest is alive and an integral part of our identity and legacy.

Written by **Elizabeth Swanson Andi**

naturelikes*toplay: a photo initiative

Captured in May of 2023 on the Rio Nushino and Rio Curaray in Ecuador, Arizona State University, student photojournalist Donovan Johnson, presents “Nature Likes to Play “. As part of an intensive study abroad program, Donovan and fellow students learned from Kichwa and Waorani knowledge and biocultures to explore the challenges faced by the Amazon Rainforest and seek sustainable solutions for its preservation. The auctioned works from this exhibition will benefit Iyarina Center for Learning in Ecuador, an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Amazon Rainforest. Through intertwining art and the awareness of environmental issues, om*art seeks to create a positive impact on the world around us. The ‘Nature Likes to Play’ collection is not just a visual journey; it’s a call to action, an invitation to appreciate and preserve the Amazon Rainforest.

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Capturado en Mayo del 2023 en el río Nushino y el río Curaray en Ecuador, el estudiante fotoperiodista de Universidad Estatal de Arizona, Donovan Johnson, presenta “Nature Likes to Play”. Como parte de un programa intensivo de estudios en el extranjero. Donovan y sus compañeros aprendieron del conocimiento y las bioculturas Kichwa y Waorani para explorar los desafíos que enfrenta la Selva Amazónica y buscar soluciones sustentables para su preservación. Las obras de esta exposición beneficiará al Centro de Aprendizaje Iyarina en Ecuador, una organización dedicada a la preservación de la Selva Amazónica. A través del entrelazamiento del arte y la conciencia sobre las cuestiones ambientales, om*art busca crear un impacto positivo en el mundo que nos rodea. La colección ‘Nature Likes to Play’ no es sólo un viaje visual; es un llamado a la acción y una invitación a apreciar y preservar la Selva Amazónica.

nl*tp

















Iyarina

/ee-yah-ree-nah/

To think by looking out at the land and remembering what has happened there; and from this remembering to envision the emerging future.









naturelikes

Moments captured by Donovan Johnson

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*The **naturelikes***toplay photo initiative was made possible by the amazing people at Iyarina Center for Learning in Ecuador, the native Waorani and Kichwa communities on the Rio Nushino and Rio Curaray, the Greater Good Phoenix, the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the ASU School of Sustainability, Wash the City, Pueblo Life, **om***art, and the entire 2023 Indigenous Sustainability Solutions in the Amazon study abroad group.*

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es**toplay*



Ilakichina

/yah-kee-chee-nuh/

**To feel love, sorrow and empathy for
those that you love.**









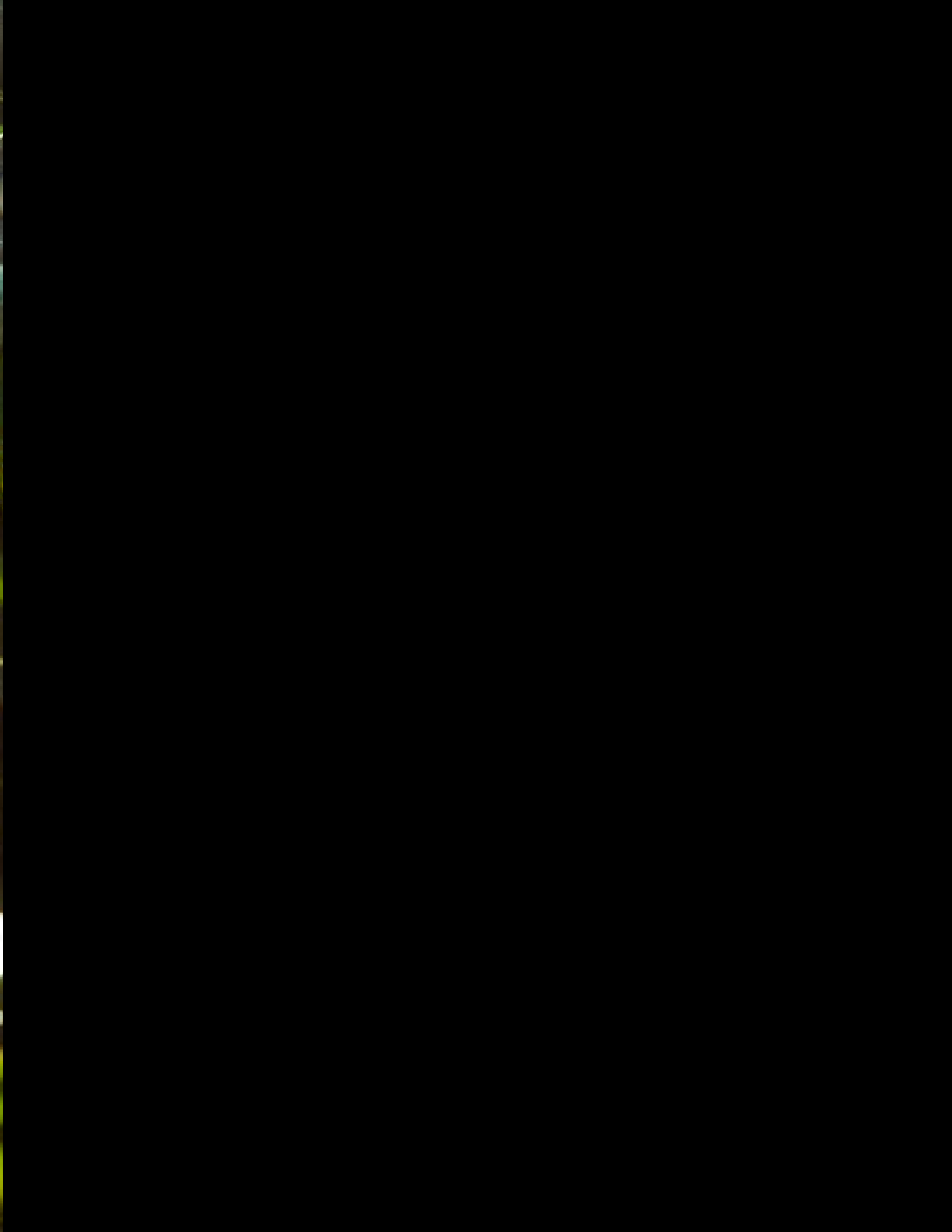












Kuyana
/coo-yah-na/

**To give as an act of appreciation
for someone else.**

Kawsak Sacha
/kow-sak-sah-cha/

The forest is alive, just as we are alive.

Yaku Runa
/yah-coo-roo-nah/

**Non-human water beings who exist in
terrestrial and aquatic life.**

Virdi Pimpilatu

/veer-dee-peem-pee-la-too/

**A butterfly that is on the blue
to green color scale.**

SHILI SHILI

The name of and also the call of a swallow, said to express its happiness when rain occurs, or when it flies near waterfalls.

HAHAY - HUHUY - HUHUYLLA

The sound of happy laughter.

CHUN

A sudden, complete absence of sound.

BULLUKUKU

Sounds of the bullukuku hawk communicating with human.

